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SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

CONTAINING

REGOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNOR.

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT.

PARKERSBURG, W. VA., Jan. 1, 1887.

To His Excellency,

GOVERNOR E. WILLIS WILSON,

SIR:—Since my last report to you there has been no change in the sanitary condition of the State. In a previous report I referred to certain imperfections in the present health law of the State, and the desirability of certain amendments to increase its efficiency. I would respectfully suggest that you recommend to the Legislature such amendments as in your judgment will increase the efficiency of the law.

I. In regard to the organization of the county boards of health. The making of the county boards to consist entirely of physicians appears to me to be too exclusively medical to secure the sympathy or the support of the community. They do not realize that the work of the county board concerns specially and directly themselves, but they look upon it as rather a medical matter that may be left mainly to the doctors. Now I would suggest that the county boards should consist of the president of the county court, one citizen (who need not be a physician) and one physician; that the physician be the executive officer of the board, and the county health officer, and that he be paid by the county such salary as the county court may fix, to secure faithful discharge of duty. The trouble now is that the county boards are not supported by their respective county courts. They may meet, pass resolutions, make hygienic rules and regulations, and report to their county courts; their suggestions are not heeded, their regulations are enforced, and they are not compensated for their services or loss of time from private business. Is it any wonder that good men under such circumstances are reluctant to serve on county boards?

II. The law with regard to itinerant physicians, and irregular practitioners of medicine is not enforced. The State loses an amount of revenue from this source to which it is entitled by the law, and the

ignorant are swindled out of their money by a class of men who unable to make a living where they are known, and who travel from place to place vaunting the virtues of their nostrums, and escape the payment to the State of the tax collectable from itinerant physicians, under the transparent cloak of "vendors of patent medicine." The Illinois law classes the vendors of patent medicines with the itinerant physicians and makes them subject to the same tax (section 12 Act to Regulate the Practice of Medicine in Illinois, approved May 29, 1877). I would respectfully suggest that our law would be improved by adopting the same course.

III. The section 10, of the same act of Illinois provides, that the State Board of Health may refuse to grant certificates, or may revoke certificates for unprofessional or dishonorable conduct. Such power is not often required, but, I think, it should be in the hands of the Board.

IV. The value of vital statistics is hard to estimate, for it must necessarily furnish the foundation of sanitary science, and many other interests make it desirable that we should know the births, marriages and deaths of our people, with the cause of the deaths. The ratio of the same as to causes, as to the population of our State, as to sections, as to races, as to various pursuits, as to ages, and, in fact, we want all the information that can be obtained on the subject of the health, the life and the deaths of our people. These statistics are at this time very imperfectly obtained and are not generally accessible to our people. I would suggest that, under the general direction of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the State Board of Health be made Registrar of Vital Statistics. That he should collect these statistics, and prepare and publish a report of them in connection with the report of the State Board of Health, and that he should receive such compensation for his services as the State Board of Health may fix; said compensation to be paid out of the money now appropriated for the State Board of Health. That it be made the duty of the clerks of the county courts, to make returns to the Secretary of the State Board of Health of the births, marriages and deaths annually on the 1st of July, and that such returns be made on forms to be supplied them by the Secretary of State. That it be made the duty of every attendant at a birth to report, the same to the clerk of the county court within thirty days thereafter. That it be made the duty of every minister or magistrate solemnizing a marriage to report the same to the clerk of the county court within thirty days thereafter. That it be made the duty of every physician, coroner and undertaker to report every case of death to the clerk of the county court within thirty days thereafter. To insure the performance of these duties, I think, some compensation should be given for the performance, and some penalty attached to the failure to do so. The Illinois law above referred to very fully covers these points in sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9.

V. Could such a thing be done I would advise the compulsory vaccination, but I am fully aware of the difficulties surrounding the subject. Yet when we see that one mismanaged case of small-pox in February, 1885, cost Montreal 3,164 lives and an outlay on public

account for small-pox of \$137,770.00, taking no account of the cost to the province outside of the city, or the cost to private individuals, or the loss from trade and travel, we cannot fail to feel the importance of the matter. In Germany, where vaccination is compulsory, the mortality from small-pox has been reduced to 1.44 per 100,000 persons, whilst in the rest of Europe, where it is not compulsory, the mortality from the same cause is 101 per 100,000 persons; and in ten years since the enforcement of repeated vaccination in the German army there has not been a death from small-pox. I would at least suggest that the county courts should, through their county boards of health, make provision for the free vaccination of the poor under the supervision of the overseers of the poor.

VI. Diseases of most virulent types are prevailing among the cattle, hogs and horses in States east and West of us; which seem so far to defy all treatment; and which in their nature are highly infectious, and can only be met by the destruction of the animals infected. To such an extent is this true that the General Government has now under consideration measures for its relief. The recent slaughter of infected cattle in and around Chicago will cost the State of Illinois over \$60,000.00. It seems that it would not be asking too much in the interest of the stock of the State to ask that power be granted to the State Board and county boards to quarantine against the bringing of infected cattle, hogs or horses into the State.

In view of the continued prevalence of Asiatic cholera in Europe and its recent appearance in South America, it would be unwise and improper to relax any precaution against its occurrence. I would therefore suggest that you recommend to the Legislature the continuance of the grant of an emergency fund, to be used by the Board of Health only in the event of some sudden and unforeseen requirement for such a fund. The fund so granted by the last legislature two years ago, has not been touched, and, I think, might well be continued or increased, for unless there should arise some such urgent call for it, it will remain in the treasury.

I must beg that you will pardon any unseemly urgency in my suggestions. I am prompted only by an earnest desire to advance the interests for which the Board of Health was organized; the means to accomplish this end I leave to your superior judgment and discretion.

I am, very respectfully, &c.,

T. A. HARRIS, M. D..
Secretary State Board of Health.